

Danish government prepared to fight in Greenland deployment in response to US threats

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25 January 2026

In response to US President Donald Trump's threat to use military force to seize control of Greenland, Denmark's Social Democrat-led government equipped soldiers deployed to the island earlier this month with live ammunition and an order to engage in combat if attacked. The report revealing these details from public broadcaster DR underlines the extent to which the Transatlantic alliance has broken down, a process that Trump's temporary retreat on Greenland at last week's World Economic Forum will do nothing to reverse.

Trump began the year by invading Venezuela and abducting its President Nicolas Maduro, and repeatedly issuing belligerent threats to bomb Iran with the aim of overturning the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran. Under these conditions, Danish officials felt compelled, in the words of the DR report, to prepare for "the worst of all possible imaginable scenarios."

On 14 January, civilian and military planes were dispatched to Greenland from Denmark to strengthen military capabilities on the island as quickly as possible. The operation, referred to as "Arctic Endurance," also involved small contingents of military personnel from Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Britain, the Netherlands, and Finland, who travelled to Greenland as part of a "scoping mission" to draw up plans for a larger NATO military presence in the Arctic. It was this operation that prompted Trump to issue his threat of tariffs against the eight countries involved—a threat he later walked back following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Marc Rutte in Davos last Wednesday.

According to DR, the military operation included "several phases," which the broadcaster decided not to report in detail. However, the report noted that soldiers were ordered to "strengthen their presence and level of activity in Greenland to demonstrate the will and ability to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom [of Denmark]."

The report explained that the Danish soldiers were equipped with so-called "KUP ammunition," which they always had on their person in order to go into combat at a moment's notice. The operation includes ground, naval, and air forces, with Denmark flying F-35 fighter jets over Greenland for the first time and dispatching a frigate to patrol the ice-free parts of the North Atlantic around Greenland. On Saturday, French fighter jets joined the Danish F-35s for long-distance patrols over southeast Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

Notwithstanding the claims in the media and by leading European politicians that the threat of military conflict over Greenland has been removed by the deal struck between Trump and Rutte, the fact remains that two ostensible NATO allies came very close to all-out war. Moreover, it is clear that whatever the details of the agreement turn out to be, it has laid the basis for a massive escalation of military activity in Greenland and throughout the Arctic region, setting the stage for even more explosive clashes as the major powers jostle for influence.

The European Union (EU) held an emergency leaders' summit on Thursday evening. Although the gathering was called prior to Trump's climbdown on tariffs, the discussion among the European imperialists remained focused on how to assert themselves as an independent actor capable of confronting the US as a rival. *Politico* referred to the gathering as appearing like "a wake" to the "decades-long world order" based on the Transatlantic alliance.

EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen stated after the meeting that the European powers must expand their military presence in the Arctic, adding that a portion of the €150 billion made available last year by the Commission for rearmament programmes would be directed towards procuring equipment for use in Arctic conditions.

Under conditions in which Trump and other leading officials repeatedly assert US imperialism's right to dominate the Western hemisphere by expelling all non-

hemispheric competitors, the European military build-up in the Arctic, whether or not it takes place under the NATO umbrella, is a recipe for ever sharper conflicts. Just one day after the EU summit, the Trump administration released its latest National Defence Strategy, which declared Washington's intention to focus on military operations in its "near abroad" and in the Indo-Pacific against China.

Greenland was mentioned five times in the document, and almost always in connection with the US determination to control the hemisphere from the Arctic to the tip of South America. One typical passage stated that the US military will "guarantee US military and commercial access to key terrain, especially the Panama Canal, Gulf of America, and Greenland." Trump could just as quickly reverse last week's pledge not to use military force in Greenland if American imperialism feels that the European powers are obstacles to this agenda.

The basic driving force underlying the growing Transatlantic rivalry is the deepening world capitalist crisis, which finds expression in Trump's aggressive threats and erratic shifts in policy. Relations between the great powers resemble ever more clearly the inter-imperialist tensions that exploded into world wars twice in the 20th century, in 1914 and 1939. Trump's "America first" agenda considers domination of the Western hemisphere not as some kind of retreat on the part of American imperialism, but as the basis for fighting wars with its rivals on a global scale, including China, Russia, and the European powers.

The European imperialists are equally as predatory, as was made clear in the speech last week by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. The former BlackRock executive told his wealthy Davos audience that his right-wing coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany was pursuing a course of the militarisation of Europe under German leadership, a programme that twice led the German bourgeoisie to war in the 20th century as it launched a grab for world power. If Merz has struck a more conciliatory tone over Greenland, emphasising the need for NATO to play the leading military role in the Arctic, including the US, it is because the European ruling class feels it needs more time to rearm so that it can act independently of the US, on which it still relies for much of its military equipment. This strategy depends upon an assault on what remains of public services and the social conditions of the working class to fund bloated and expanding military budgets.

The smaller states like Denmark hope to secure their place at the table of imperialist plunder through alliances with the great powers. Nobody should be fooled by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen's repeated invocations of Copenhagen's defence of the "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity" of Greenland,

and their claim that only Greenlanders can determine their future. Denmark ruled Greenland as a colony for over two centuries, and sacrificed its "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity" in 1951 when it concluded a bilateral defence agreement with the US as part of its Cold War alliance with Washington. The agreement allowed the US to build military bases essentially wherever it liked and use them for virtually anything, including the storage of nuclear weapons. At the height of the Cold War, Washington stationed some 10,000 troops on the island.

Today, the Danish ruling class hopes to reach some form of accommodation with the US that will at least give Copenhagen nominal control over Greenland. At the same time, they are quite prepared to facilitate a massive military buildup by the European imperialists in the region, just so long as the Danish flag can fly in Nuuk. In this way, they hope to secure Danish capitalism's access to the rich natural resources on Greenland, as well as the potentially lucrative wealth it could control in the broader Arctic on the basis of its territorial water claims. This wealth is not only related to the untapped oil and gas under the seabed, but also the opening up of new shipping routes as sea ice melts.

The tasks of opposing the sharpening inter-imperialist antagonisms in the Arctic and elsewhere, and stopping the descent into another world war, can be accomplished only by the international working class. Workers on both sides of the Atlantic, including those entering struggle against Trump's dictatorial rule in the US and the mass job and wage cuts in Europe to fund the continent's military buildup, must unite in a joint anti-war movement to put an end to capitalist exploitation. They must counterpose to the programme of war and austerity advanced by all governments the perspective of world socialist revolution.



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